

Dear Ms. Pnkerton,

Thanking you for both your letters I would like to start with your questions.

Q. 1: Can there be multiple births from one death?

Answer: We can better understand what is death and rebirth if we understand what is citta now. Are there at this moment more than one citta, experiencing more than one object at a time? Can you think of two things exactly at the same moment? One can find out that this is not so. We may think that there can be seeing, hearing and thinking at the same time, but it only seems so because cittas arise and fall away so rapidly, succeeding one another. Visible object cannot be experienced at the same time as sound, or as a concept, one may be thinking of.

One citta arises, it performs its function of knowing one object, then it falls away and it is succeeded by the next one. So long as we are in the cycle of birth and death (all those who have not yet attained arahatship), each citta has to be succeeded by the next one. ~~What happens~~ The falling away of citta is a momentary death. In this sense there is birth and death at each moment.

What is what we in conventional language call 'death'? The last citta of this lifespan falls away and it is immediately succeeded by the next citta which is the first citta of the next life. Thus, ~~consequently~~ what happens then is not different from what happens at this moment, except that it is the end ~~and~~ of this lifespan, which is followed by birth again which may take place in this human plane again, or in another plane, depending on the kamma which produces the rebirth-consciousness.

The dying-consciousness of the arahat is not succeeded by rebirth-consciousness, he is freed from the cycle of birth and death. Thus, there are three kinds of death: death of citta at each moment, death as the end of one's span, and the death of the arahat.

I hope this answers your question.

Point 2: who are the eight disciples, who are ariyan?

Answer: Actually ~~there~~ they are called the four pairs of disciples. Meant is: the lokuttara cittas (supramundane cittas, experiencing nibbana) which arise at the four subsequent stages of enlightenment: the stage of the sotapanna, the stage of the sakadagami, the ~~sixth~~ stage of the anagami and the stage of the arahat. Each stage has two kinds of citta: the magga-citta which eradicates defilements and the phala-citta (fruit) which is the result of the magga-citta and also experiences nibbana. Thus, we have to take into account eight kinds of cittas, ~~not~~ these are real.

Q. What are the six pairs?

A. 12 sobhana cetasikas among the 19 which accompany each ~~ex~~ sobhana citta and each have their own function while they assist the citta. The six pairs are qualities of citta and cetasika, such as pliancy adaptability, calm, proficiency in kusala. One may hear the Dhamma but not be ready to receive it because of rigidity of mind and ~~unable~~ ~~to receive it~~ lack of adaptability to what is wholesome. A mental suppleness in the wholesome way is needed in order to perform what is wholesome in a competent and efficient way.

I have to finish and revise first all the chapters about the cetasikas before they can be presented for print.

You mentioned many books you read about Buddhism, but would it not be better to spend one's energy on the teachings themselves? Have you got the English translations from the pali text Society (also in Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul). You could for example start with Kindred Sayings IV, Middle Length Sayings I, II, III, Gradual Sayings I, II, or up to V. Abhidhamma ~~commentary~~ by Nyanapora, (about the six pairs) available at Buddhist B. S., Kandy, Sri Lanka. Manual of Abhidhamma, by Narada Thera, at the same place.

What is sati? I think you know it is different from concentration? It is very difficult to understand what sati is, only from theory. It is useful ^{to know} what is not sati is ~~either~~ not to go the wrong way. If one tries to concentrate on something that is not ~~it~~, it is merely thinking of a concept. ~~It is not forgetful of~~ reality appearing now. (But there are many levels of sati, it arises with each sobhana citta. Now I am talking about sati in satipatthana). ~~It~~ There is hearing all the time but usually there is forgetfulness of the reality of sound which is experienced by hearing. Think of the concepts of cars we 'hear' or voices we 'hear', or words we 'hear', but that is thinking of concepts. There is sound and it has a characteristic, it is loud, ^{with} different degrees of loudness. Sound is a reality which can be heard. It is not a person, not a car. When there is non-forgetfulness of sound which appears, right understanding of its characteristic can be developed. There is also hearing. No self which hears, it is the hearing which hears. When there is mindfulness of hearing it can be known as only a kind of nama, a reality which experiences sound.

What conditions sati? Study of the teachings. The Buddha spoke all the time about the six doors. And considering them in one's life, this is very important. If we just read a lot but never ponder over it or consider realities in our life, the reading will not help us much. Better to read a little and consider it. What is lobha? Is there lobha now? What are realities and what are concepts? Are there realities now? What is wholesome, what is not wholesome? Do we know when the citta is akusala citta?